

Natural Resource Conservation Programs in the Puget Sound Region: Options for Private landowners



Private landowners of the Puget Sound area play a vital role in the management of the natural resources that define our region. Conservation and stewardship measures undertaken by landowners have a critical impact on agriculture and forest production, water quality, soil erosion, fish and wildlife habitats, shorelines, and groundwater resources. In many cases landowners want to engage in conservation and stewardship practices, but need technical and financial assistance.

This document and the two attachments focus on voluntary, incentive-based land conservation tools, including property tax reduction programs, land trust conservation options, and conservation payment programs. Also identified are stewardship programs that offer technical assistance, education opportunities, and cost-share arrangements. A combination of conservation and stewardship tools may be deployed to meet a landowner's overall land management goals.

Developing a Conservation Strategy

Before finalizing a conservation or stewardship plan, consider the following:

1. Determine your land conservation goals:

Discuss your land conservation goals with family, heirs, and other appropriate people such as neighbors and financial advisors. Think long-term, beyond your ownership, and perhaps your children's ownership.

Define what is it about the land that you want to conserve. Examples may include but are not limited to a unique natural feature, a farming or forestry tradition, or a place to live for current and future family members.

Start to write out your goals and ideas, with the eventual objective of drafting a management plan. At this point a general project concept usually is sufficient.

2. Decide type of project to undertake.

Consider what tools and programs can help you achieve your land conservation goals. Government agencies, conservation districts, land trusts, and other public and private organizations can provide you with guidance on appropriate conservation and stewardship options.

Technical assistance for evaluating your resources and generating management alternatives is also available from many sources, including extension agents, county and state foresters and wildlife managers, and private consultants.

3. Working with conservation and stewardship partners:

Landowners should obtain current, detailed information from the agencies and organizations managing individual programs before committing to a project. Find out about sign-up periods, application requirements, and payment schedules.

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3. Working with conservation and stewardship partners continued:

Be prepared with goals, ideas, or perhaps a draft management plan to use for discussion with your chosen conservation partners. Include a description of the project area (legal description may be required.)

Have a land manager from the organization visit your property (some may not be able to do this until after you have applied for a program.) This person will examine the property, review the proposed project, and discuss your personal goals and budget restrictions with you.

The managing organization may direct you to another program if the one you request is not appropriate. Make sure the program fits your budget and management plans before you commit.

If a program matches your land management goals, complete the application process. If relevant (e.g. for cost share projects), be sure to receive project approval before beginning project, submit necessary records about project, have the project reviewed by organization, and file for reimbursement costs in accordance with program guidelines.

The two attached documents provide further details on conservation and stewardship tools, and the organizations and people that can assist landowners with their land management projects. The documents focus on organizations working in the Mason County area:

A Summary of Land Conservation Options for Landowners in the Puget Sound Area: This 6-page brochure summarizes land conservation options and the organizations and people that offer them. The brochures provide a broad overview of available conservation tools, and inform landowners where they can obtain more detailed information and services. Testimonial by landowners who have enrolled in conservation programs are also presented.

Conservation and Stewardship Tools Directories: These directories list the programs and people offering tools to landowners, ranging from payment, cost share, and tax incentive tools to technical and grant assistance programs.



Natural lands benefit both wildlife and people. Landscape features provide the following functions and values:

Forests and Native Plants:

- Store and filter water
- Reduce flooding
- Replenish aquifers and streams
- Stabilize soils and stream channels
- Provide food and shelter for wildlife

Natural Shorelines:

- Filter sediments/pollutants
- Stabilize stream banks
- Store water and reduce flooding
- Shade salmon streams
- Supply nutrients
- Provide fish and wildlife habitat

Wetlands:

- Store water and reduce flooding
- Filter pollutants
- Provide wildlife benefits

Nearshore areas between shoreline and open sea:

- Reduce shoreline erosion
- Filter pollutants
- Reduce coastal flooding
- Harbor nutrient-rich nurseries
- Provide spawning, rearing, and feeding ground for numerous species

Working farms and forests:

Economic benefits to individuals and the region in the form of jobs and incomes.

Many of the functions and values noted under landscape features above.